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FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY
EXERCISES

IT was deemed fitting by the Board of Trustees that the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Museum on April 13, 1870, should be marked by exercises commemorative of the event, of the men whose vision brought it about, of the long line of Trustees to whose wisdom the conduct of its affairs has been entrusted, and of the Benefactors whose munificence has made the growth of the half century possible. To this end a meeting was held on Tuesday, May 18, at which addresses were made by Hon. Francis D. Gallatin, Commissioner of Parks, representing the City of New York; John H. Finley, President of the University of the State of New York, on behalf of the Governor; Morris Gray, President of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Massachusetts; Charles L. Hutchinson, President of the Art Institute, Chicago, Illinois; and the President of the Museum, Robert W. de Forest, who presided.

Following these exercises, which took place in the Lecture Hall, the audience adjourned to the entrance hall where, at the foot of the main staircase, an address was delivered by the First Vice President, Elihu Root, memorializing the Founders and Benefactors of the Museum, preceding the unveiling of two marble tablets inscribed with their names.

Among those present on this occasion were representatives of the civic and educational institutions of the City and State, ten presidents and seventeen directors of other art museums, lenders to the anniversary exhibition, with other distinguished guests, and the Trustees, Fellows of the Corporation, and Staff of the Metropolitan Museum.

A volume with a record of the proceedings, the addresses of the day, and an account of the development of the Museum during the period since the publication of the History of the Museum in 1913, will be issued in the autumn. In this issue of the BULLETIN the address of the President of the Museum is printed in full, and other addresses will follow as space permits.

FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY
MEMORABILIA

THE story of an institution may be read in its documents, letters, circulars, announcements, and other printed or written papers issued by it from time to time. With this fact in mind, a group of such Museum material from the inception of the idea of its foundation to the present time, with likenesses of the men who have been connected with its history, has been brought together in chronological order in the Room of Recent Accessions. Such a visual demonstration of the material from which the history is written serves to impress even the casual observer with the painstaking quality of the building-up process, and to give respect for the labor of the past. It serves, also, to recall, as is fitting at this time, the men whose forethought, energy, and devotion have made the Museum what it is today.

A brief synopsis of the principal events in the growth of the Museum has been brought together in a pamphlet entitled a "Review of Fifty Years' Development," which may be used as an outline in following the exhibition of the collection of memorabilia.

THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY
OF THE MUSEUM
AN ADDRESS BY ROBERT W.
DE FOREST, PRESIDENT

FIFTY years ago The Metropolitan Museum of Art existed only as the vision of a group of public-spirited persons—artists, clergymen, lawyers, men of affairs. It was fitting that a poet, William Cullen Bryant, should have presided at the meeting which first made their vision articulate.

This vision, unlike most dreams, had clear definition. It embodied a museum to contain objects illustrative of "all the arts, whether industrial, educational, or recreative;" a museum "to encourage and develop the study of the fine arts and the application of arts to manufactures and practical life."

But however clearly defined, it was then only a vision. Those dreamers had "no

building, not even a site; no existing collection as a nucleus; no money." But they were practical men. They were not content merely to dream a beautiful dream. They set out at once to make their dream come true. Today the institution which they founded has a building extending along four blocks on Fifth Avenue; a site on which there is still room for expansion; collections which already rival in extent and surpass in installation those of the great museums of Europe, and money to the amount of more than \$16,000,000. True, the Museum is restricted in the use of most of this money but it is none the less Museum money.

The Founders, if they could today see the realization of their vision (I hope they can), would not recognize it. The conception, the purpose of this Museum, its foundation, is theirs—the same now as it was then. The structure which has been built on this foundation has mounted up far beyond the wildest flight of their imaginings.

It is even pathetic to recall their early efforts. Their appeal for support reads—"A subscription of \$250,000 will ensure the complete success of the Museum." The funding of a million of dollars "would give an annual income sufficient to provide for proper care of the building and collections and to add to the collections annually."

It took a long time to find even that \$250,000. In March, 1871, only \$106,000 had been subscribed. It was not until later that the initial \$250,000 had been secured and the subscriptions became binding. \$10,000 was the largest subscription. There were two of \$5,000. The rest came in sums of \$1,000 and of \$500.

The Founders began their collections by the purchase of 174 old masters, for \$116,180.27. They held their first exhibition two years after organization in a rented dancing school.

They then had their first lesson in accepting gifts. "Mr. Rowe presents us," writes Mr. Johnston, "with a colossal dancing girl, by Schwanthaler, the celebrated German sculptor at Munich. It may be very fine but eight feet of dance is a trial to the feelings. Hereafter we must

curb the exuberance of donors, except in the article of money, of which latter they may give as much as they please."

That was forty-eight years ago. Today we have a different kind of exhibition. As we look through these spacious galleries filled with priceless objects of art, most of them in perpetual possession of the Museum, others lent to it to celebrate this occasion, we may well put to ourselves the question, How is it that the vision of the Founders has been realized so far beyond their most extravagant expectation? How has all this come to pass? I say come to pass rather than been brought to pass; for to say it has been brought to pass would be to ascribe the result entirely to human direction. But it would never have come to pass unless it had been in large measure brought to pass. I put this question not in a spirit of self-congratulation or self-laudation. The future is before us. It should be a future quite as much beyond our present realization as that realization is beyond the expectation of the Founders. It can be so if we clearly apprehend the causes of our present development and continue to pursue the same policies which have produced it. Nor is this inquiry solely of interest to ourselves. It equally concerns the rapidly increasing fellowship of art museums in America so many of which have honored us today by the presence of their presidents and directors.

I will try to enumerate some of the chief causes to which I attribute our present position.

First, I name the breadth of our foundation. This we owe not only to our first President, John Taylor Johnston, but to those who were associated with him at the outset, such as George F. Comfort, William T. Blodgett, Russell Sturgis, Jr., George P. Putnam, and William C. Prime. It would have been quite in the spirit of the time when our Museum was organized to have fashioned it after most European museums and made it simply a collection of paintings and sculpture. But the purpose of our institution was far broader. It was to represent not only the fine arts but all the arts—"not painting and statuary alone, but multiplied art such as prints, and bronzes, and industrial and decorative art

of all kinds," and the application of all arts "to manufactures and practical life." It was not confined to ancient art. Modern art was equally within its scope. It was not merely intended to show beautiful objects—to be "recreative." It was to show them for a practical purpose—to be "educational." We are carrying out this fundamental purpose of the Founders by representing all the arts in our collections and giving to each proportionate representation. This has been possible only during the last fifteen years, since our resources have been increased. It is illustrated by the creation of our different departments and the assembling of our staff. It is further illustrated by the allocation of our purchase funds to different departments. We have now, besides the Department of Paintings, which has existed almost from the start, the following departments, which are named in the order of their establishment: Classical Art, Egyptian Art, Decorative Arts, Arms and Armor, Far Eastern Art, Prints. The youngest of these departments, now only three years old, has already attained full growth, as is illustrated by its present exhibition.

Secondly, our Museum was popular in its origin. It was the project of no single man. A large group of men of different and various callings took part in defining its purposes and laying its foundations. It was not to be a Corcoran Gallery or a Field Museum. Not that I would belittle the public spirit of a Corcoran or a Field, but the form in which their public spirit found expression brought with it some limitations.

Because popular in its origin it has been popular in the support which it has received from a generous and public-spirited public. This is both cause and effect. Except for such support in the past many of its activities could not have been undertaken or developed. Except for such support it would have no purchase funds with which systematically to increase its collections and make them useful to the public. Except for such support to supplement the decreasing city appropriation for maintenance it could not sustain itself and throw its collections open so freely to the

public. That it has such support is due to the fact that like the profitable servant in the New Testament parable, it has not kept its talent in a napkin, and like that profitable servant has had more talents given to it.

It is gratifying to us to realize that our public support comes not only from the citizens of our own city but from others. It is right that this should be so if thereby we do not diminish the resources of art museums in other American cities. For we are serving not only the City of New York but all parts of the country. We are not merely a New York museum, we are in title as well as in fact a metropolitan museum. The largest gift the Museum ever received was from a citizen of New Jersey, Jacob S. Rogers. True, the two next largest came from our own city. But of the two next in order, and each amounting to more than \$1,000,000, one came from Owego, New York, and the other from Zanesville, Ohio.

Among the causes which have contributed to the Museum's present development I should not omit the personality of its Founders and their successors or of its staff. Here also cause and effect are intermingled. We could not have secured for the Museum trustees with the qualifications which our Trustees have had without giving them opportunity for effective service. We could not have given them that opportunity without the defined purpose given to us by our Founders and the resources to carry out that purpose given to us by a generous public. Nor could these Trustees carry out that purpose, even with such resources, without an able and efficient staff. The Museum family as now constituted—Director, staff, and Trustees—is and has been for many years a happy family, without any of the jars which frequently invade the family relation, and all the members of that family are working cordially together to make our Museum a faithful servant of the people.

Our Museum, besides being popular in its origin and in its support, has been popular and democratic in its organization. From the outset it sought and had close

relation with our city government, and city officers are ex-officio members of its Board of Trustees. It was because of such relation that we have our site and our building. It is because of such relation that we have a city contribution toward our annual cost of maintenance. I know that some of our Trustees at times questioned the advisability of this relation. They feared lest it might lead to political interference. I know that our sister museum in Boston without such a relation has singularly prospered. But during all of these fifty years the fears of timid trustees have proved groundless. And even if this relation may involve some embarrassment, some loss, the gain, to me, is far greater. By reason of this relation our Museum is essentially a people's museum. It is not a private gallery for the use of our Trustees and members. It is a public gallery for the use of all the people, high and low, and even more for the low than for the high, for the high can find artistic inspiration in their own homes. The low can find it only here.

The great crowds from east side, west side, and every side—men, women, and children—which throng our galleries every Saturday and Sunday, which stand in silent rapture when music combines with its sister arts to voice a harmony more perfect than music can produce alone, feel and have a right to feel that it is their museum and can add the joy of possession to their other delights.

Do not understand me as advocating complete public control, be it municipal or state, of any American art museum. It is the combination of public and private control which we have in the Metropolitan that seems to me so desirable. That is, a board of trustees, elected by the corporation for terms of office sufficiently long to ensure continuous policies, and ex-officio trustees in the persons of particular city officers to hold office for the term of their election by the people. The present lease by the City under which the Museum occupies its buildings, coupled with the presence on our Board of city officers, seems to me to make this partnership, as it may be called, between the City and the Museum quite perfect.

Chief, however, among all the causes which have given the Museum, in my opinion, its present position, is what I may call, for lack of a better term, the active part it is taking in community life. In a sense it is its direct contribution to education. In another sense it is its direct contribution to recreation. It is evidenced on the educational side by our close relation to the teachers and children of our schools, public and private, by our Museum instructors who give expert guidance, by the hospitality of our class rooms, by our many lecture courses for artisans as well as art students, by the labeling of our collections, by their illustration with photographs and plans, and by our catalogues and handbooks. It is evidenced on the side of recreation by our story-telling hours for children and by our free concerts.

Americanism is a popular term just now, though of somewhat undefined application, but what can make more for Americanism in its true sense, and for what is more than Americanism, for good citizenship and neighborliness, than our free concerts, the latest of which was attended by more than 10,000 people, and than the crowds of children who come to our Museum every Sunday afternoon to listen to the story telling and who frequently fill our lecture hall twice over?

Such activities demonstrate to the people of our city that our Museum is a real, living, human organism, with heart as well as mind; that it is ready not only to open its doors to invited guests, but go out "into the by-ways and hedges" and to bid all to come in and that all who do come in will be equally welcomed. For there are no privileged classes in our Museum unless it be the children, and they are not a class. We are not content simply to show dead things, however beautiful they are and however much inspiration may come from their dead beauty. We seek to make everything in our Museum alive and to enter as a living force into all the interests of our community. This is our contribution toward making art free for democracy.

In such policies we enter a field quite unknown to the European art museums.

Our policy exemplifies what may be called the American museum idea, which is practised by many of our fellow American museums.

And what should be the policies of the Museum in the future, so that our successors, when they come fifty years hence to celebrate its hundredth anniversary, may do so with the same satisfaction with which we celebrate its fiftieth? Strict adherence, in my judgment, to the policies of the past, with possibly some difference of emphasis and an open-minded readiness to meet the changes of public sentiment in the future just as the Trustees of the past generation met the changing sentiment of later times. For instance, Sunday opening of the Museum would have shocked the Founders and seemed to most of them sinful. Some of them, could they have foreseen it, would have refused to take any part in the enterprise. But many of these same Founders joined with Trustees of a newer generation in forming the majority which in 1891 decreed Sunday opening.

Our Museum should continue its original policy of recognizing all the arts and giving no undue preponderance to any. It should be educational quite as much as recreative and recreative quite as much as educational. I look to greater emphasis being laid on modern art. The art of past centuries which has stood the test of time and created standards to which we must ever look for guidance must always be the fundamental basis of any art museum, but modern art should not be excluded. We are interested quite as much, if not more, in what the art world is doing now as we are in what it has done in the past. Modern art in painting and sculpture is well represented in our Museum. The other forms of modern art are still to be adequately represented.

Our Museum has been accused of neglecting our own national American art. There was a time not long since when I think this accusation was justified. It is certainly not justified now. Four of our galleries are now given up entirely to American painting. Fifteen years ago (1904) we had only 147 American pictures, representing 83 American painters, and 48

pieces of American sculpture, representing 26 American sculptors. Today we have 503 paintings, representing 214 American painters, and 186 pieces of sculpture, representing 91 American sculptors. We have in these later years acquired a very complete collection of American decorative art, original rooms and their furnishings, but we have so far been able to exhibit only a small part of these collections and even that part inadequately. I confidently look forward to greater emphasis being placed on American art and it would not be at all surprising if our next development in the line of departmental organization would be a Department of American Decorative Art.

Our Museum has recently experimented in the line of what may be called museum extension. We have many paintings, gladly welcomed in the earlier years, which can no longer find place on our walls. We have many other objects of art of which the same is true. Except for lack of space we would gladly exhibit much of this museum material. With present limitations of space we cannot. Instead of leaving it in our storerooms we have set it to work outside. We have a loan exhibit of pictures now circulating in the branch public libraries. We have another in the Bronx. We have several exhibits touring the country under the management of the American Federation of Arts. A Metropolitan Museum collection of pictures which the Founders would have eagerly welcomed for their first exhibition is now on the road and has this winter visited eight cities as follows: Youngstown, Ohio; Charlottesville and Richmond, Virginia; Fort Worth and Galveston, Texas; Savannah, Georgia; Charleston, South Carolina; and Lima, Ohio. We are lending textiles and other exhibits to the City high schools. This is museum extension. We have definitely adopted this policy. It should be as useful as university extension. There is no limit to the degree to which it can be carried out except that of resources.

And what is our forecast of the future? How will it be with the Museum fifty years hence? Our ship has been well designed and well built. It lingered, to

be sure, at the launching, but in the retrospect the voyage so far has been exceedingly prosperous. There have been storms, but it has outridden them. There have been reefs, but it has avoided them. In later years it has sailed on with the favoring winds and favoring tides of country-wide growth and prosperity. The ship, as it sails along, will be no less staunch. The crew will be no less able and faithful. But winds and tides we cannot control.

Looking ahead, I see but one storm signal. Can and will our city continue to perform its part of our partnership relation? Our new south wing, begun by the City six years ago, has never been completed. Work on it has been at a standstill since 1917. There is no city appropriation to continue it. Ten years ago (1909) the City contributed 68 per cent. of our cost of maintenance. Five years ago (1914) this was 43 per cent. Last year (1919) it was only 28 per cent. Meanwhile the cost of our service to the public has been constantly increasing. Last year our administrative expenses were \$617,214.05, to which the City contributed \$175,000. After using for these expenses all our income applicable to administration and supplementing it by all the income which we could lawfully divert from other purposes to that of administration, there remained a deficit of \$45,503.47. This year, I am glad to say, the city contribution has been increased to \$300,000. But there will still be a deficit.

Our future development, the extent of our future service to the people of New York, depends upon the degree to which the City will provide buildings and contribute toward the cost of operation.

In Europe Government supplies to art museums not only all the buildings, but all the cost of operation and almost all the purchase funds. In New York Government is now supplying less than half the cost of operation and none of the purchase funds.

We have invited our fellow art museums to join with us in this celebration, not so much with the thought of receiving their

congratulations as of giving them ours. True it is our fiftieth birthday. But it is fifty years of progress in the growth of art museums in America that we really celebrate today. For the art museum impulse was national in extent and has gathered momentum as the years have passed by.

The Boston Museum of Fine Arts was founded in 1870 and is practically of our own age. The Chicago Art Institute dates from 1879 and is only a few years younger. The St. Louis Museum was organized in the same year as Chicago. The Pennsylvania Museum preceded it in 1876. Cincinnati and Brooklyn date from the 80's, Pittsburg and Worcester from the 90's, Toledo, Indianapolis, Detroit, and Cleveland from the present century. I am not naming all the art museums in the country. They number, according to my latest statistics (of ten years ago), 92, not counting the museum included in Mr. Rea's catalogue of American museums whose art collection is described as "one case of chinaware." Many are parts of other institutions—universities, schools, and libraries, like the Fogg Art Museum at Harvard and the Art School of Yale. But I have named the principal ones which are independent in organization, public in character, educational in purpose, aggressive in policy, and which like ours are not content to be mere depositories of objects of art but aspire to be community art centers. It is a large and increasing family. Every year will, I trust, add to its number. Some of its members have grown, in proportion to the population of the cities in which they are located, even faster than we have. Some of them have pursued an open-door, community policy even further than we have. We are glad to profit by their experience. We are glad to share with them ours. They give inspiration to us. We hope to give some inspiration to them. We have no feeling of jealousy toward them or rivalry with them, for our American public art museums form one sympathetic family, every member of which rejoices in the success and prosperity of the others. To all we give a hearty birthday greeting.